

HOUSE BILL 2376

By Hawk

AN ACT to name the Tennessee National Guard Armory in Erwin in honor of the late Sergeant First Class Mark O. Edwards, Tennessee Army National Guard.

WHEREAS, many fine and honorable traditions have arisen from the deep wellspring of honor and bravery possessed by Tennesseans, but there is no finer tradition than that which gave Tennessee its nickname; and

WHEREAS, the citizens of the "Volunteer State" have, throughout the years, willingly forsaken the comforts and securities of inaction by taking up arms against the enemies of this great Nation, risking their lives and leaving their loved ones behind to honorably safeguard the freedoms and liberties guaranteed to all citizens of these United States and vanquishing those who threaten our way of life; and

WHEREAS, established in 1887 by an act of the 45th General Assembly, the Tennessee National Guard is a dedicated collection of the finest men and women this State has to offer; always vigilant and prepared for duty, the Tennessee National Guard has proven time and again its ability to protect fellow Tennesseans and Americans and those around the world in need of aid; and

WHEREAS, our State has given birth to many fine soldiers whose deeds of valor and honor have reflected favorably on the Volunteer State, even as they have inspired us all to reach for greater glory; and

WHEREAS, from time to time, the members of this General Assembly have seen fit to name certain highways, bridges, and buildings to honor the memory of those courageous members of our military forces who gave their lives in the defense of our nation; and

WHEREAS, no Tennessean is more deserving of this honor than the late Sergeant First Class (SFC) Mark O. Edwards, who was an exemplary member of the 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, Tennessee Army National Guard; and

WHEREAS, born in Detroit, Michigan, on September 17, 1964, Mark Oscar Edwards began his military career on August 10, 1983, training as a Tank Crewman. After completion of his initial training and subsequent graduation, he was stationed in Germany for the next 18 months; and

WHEREAS, after completing his time on active duty, Mark Edwards enlisted in the Tennessee Army National Guard on July 1, 1986. He was assigned as a Tank Crewmember to Company H, 2/278th Armored Cavalry Regiment in Erwin, Tennessee, where he continued to work, learn, and train and eventually reached the position of Tank Commander; and

WHEREAS, SFC Mark O. Edwards was mobilized with Company H, 2/278th Armored Cavalry Regiment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom III on June 17, 2004. After intense training at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, and National Training Center, Fort Irwin, California, SFC Edwards was deployed to Fob Bernstein near the city of Tuz, Iraq, where he lost his life in the line of duty on June 6, 2005; and

WHEREAS, at the time of his death, Mark Edwards was 40 years old, having selflessly served 22 of those years in the military. He has left behind a wife, Kimberly, a son, Mark Andrew (Drew), and a stepdaughter, Whitney Dayton; and

WHEREAS, SFC Edwards served with great distinction as a member of the 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment; his many awards and decorations include the Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal, Army Reserve Component Achievement Medal with 4 oak leaf clusters, National Defense Service Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal with "M" device, Non-Commissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon with the number 2, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service

Ribbon, Tennessee Army National Guard Commendation Ribbon with 1 oak leaf cluster, Tennessee Army National Guard Individual Achievement Ribbon with 1 oak leaf cluster, Tennessee Army National Guard Service Ribbon with one oak leaf cluster, Tennessee Army National Guard Volunteer Ribbon, Drivers and Mechanics Badge, Drivers Badge with Track and Wheel tabs, and the 9 mm Expert Badge; and

WHEREAS, following the patriotic tradition for which the Volunteer State is renowned, SFC Mark O. Edwards did not shrink from serving in combat, believing in the justice of the cause to protect our national security and secure liberty for the Iraqi people, and as a member of the Tennessee Army National Guard, he proudly continued an essential tradition of American society: the concept of the citizen-soldier; and

WHEREAS, SFC Edwards served with great courage and gallantry, giving his life for his country and for the cause in which he believed, and for that ultimate sacrifice, this brave soldier deserves proper recognition; and

WHEREAS, SFC Edwards's dedication to excellence in the military and his love for his family, his fellow soldiers, and his country, as exemplified in his sacrifice of life itself in defense of all that he held dear, stands as an enduring example of the characteristics that have ensured the continued freedom of our nation and the preservation of its ideals over the course of our history; and

WHEREAS, it is most appropriate for this General Assembly to permanently commemorate the singular patriotism, courage, and commitment to duty of the late SFC Mark O. Edwards by naming the Tennessee National Guard Armory in Erwin in his honor; now, therefore,

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, the Tennessee National Guard Armory located at 615 S. Main Avenue in Erwin, Unicoi County, is hereby

named in honor of the late Sergeant First Class Mark O. Edwards, as a lasting tribute to one of the most outstanding citizen-soldiers this State has ever produced.

SECTION 2. The Adjutant General is directed to erect or affix suitable signs designating the Erwin Tennessee National Guard Armory in honor of the late Sergeant First Class Mark O. Edwards, Tennessee Army National Guard.

SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.